

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BERLIN 05203 101803Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 ACDA-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
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R 101700Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7945
INFO USICA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION USNATO

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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, GE, GW
SUBJECT: GDR PAPERS ATTACK SPRINGER PRESS,
THREATEN RETALIATION.

1. THE EAST BERLIN DAILY PAPERS OF AUGUST 8,
INCLUDING NEUES DEUTSCHLAND, CARRIED IDENTICAL
COMMENTARIES STRONGLY CRITICIZING THE "YELLOW-
JOURNALISM" TREATMENT OF EAST BERLIN BY THE SPRINGER
PRESS. THE COMMENTARY, WHICH IS DESCRIBED AS
"CORRESPONDENCE FROM WEST BERLIN," COMPLAINS ABOUT
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A SENSATIONALIST ARTICLE ON CRIME AND VICE IN EAST
BERLIN, PARTICULARLY PROSTITUTION, WHICH APPEARED IN
THE WEST BERLIN PAPER BILD ON MONDAY, AUGUST 7.
AFTER POINTING OUT THAT WEST BERLIN IS ITSELF A
"SWAMP OF DEPRAVITY" AND A HOTBED OF CRIME, DRUGS
AND VICE, THE COMMENTARY NOTES THAT IT WOULD NOT BE
SURPRISING IF THE GDR SHOULD REACT AGAINST THE ANTI-GDR

PROPAGANDA IN THE SPRINGER PRESS. THE ARTICLE WARNS THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO CONSIDER EMPLOYING STRICTER CONTROLS ON CURRENCY EXCHANGE. IT IS ENTIRELY CONCEIVABLE, IT GOES ON, THAT THE GDR MARK WOULD BE MADE THE ONLY VALID CURRENCY (FOR GDR CITIZENS TO HOLD) AND THAT ONLY FOREIGNERS WOULD BE PERMITTED TO MAKE PURCHASES IN THE INTERSHOP SYSTEM OF HARD-CURRENCY SHOPS. THE MOST PRACTICAL STEP, THE COMMENTARY CONCLUDES, WOULD BE TO PERMIT ENTRY INTO (EAST) BERLIN ONLY FOR PERMANENT RESIDENTS OF WEST BERLIN WHO IN FACT WISH TO VISIT THEIR RELATIVES OR WHO COME FOR HUMANITARIAN, FAMILY, RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL OR TOURIST REASONS. CERTAIN TYPES WHO ARE ONLY LOOKING FOR A CHEAP WEEKEND COULD BE PROHIBITED.

2. COMMENT: IT IS NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR WHICH AUDIENCE THE ARTICLE WAS AIMED AT, I.E. WHETHER IT WAS MEANT AS A WARNING TO THE SPRINGER PRESS TO STOP ITS SLANDEROUS TREATMENT OF THE EAST, AS A WARNING TO WEST BERLINERS NOT TO ABUSE THE RIGHT TO ENTER EAST BERLIN OR AS A WARNING TO EAST BERLINERS NOT TO TRY THROUGH VARIOUS WAYS TO GET WEST MARKS FROM VISITORS FROM THE WEST.

3. THE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE COMMENT AS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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"CORRESPONDENCE FROM WEST BERLIN" REMOVES ANY OVERT OFFICIAL SANCTION FOR THE PROPOSALS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE FACT THAT THE ARTICLE HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN ALL EAST BERLIN DAILIES IS A CLEAR SIGN THAT IT IS TO BE GIVEN SOME WEIGHT. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE ARTICLE IS AN INDICATION THAT THE GDR IS GOING TO TAKE EITHER OF THE ACTIONS SUGGESTED. HOWEVER, IT IS A SERIOUS REMINDER THAT THE GDR HAS THE POWER TO TAKE RETALIATORY ACTIONS IF SUFFICIENTLY PROVOKED. EITHER ACTION COULD HAVE MAJOR REPERCUSSIONS. CHANGES IN THE CURRENCY REGULATIONS ALONG THE LINES SUGGESTED WOULD AFFECT THE ENTIRE INTERSHOP SYSTEM AND ACCESS BY EAST GERMANS TO HARD-TO-GET GOODS. RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS TO EAST BERLIN FROM THE WEST COULD BRING INTO QUESTION THE FABRIC OF THE QA AND SUBSEQUENT EAST-WEST GERMAN TRAFFIC AGREEMENTS. BOLEN

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